Irving House.

Washington, July 31, 1858.

FORMER CORRESPONDENCE
HERBARIUM
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Dear Sir:

From your reputation in Botany, I take the liberty of asking you for a description and some little account of the plant that grows in Lower California used by the indians for poisoning their arrows, and putting in water for the destruction of animals — as is said. Perhaps you can refer me to some reliable authority who has described it. I should be glad to have this information so soon as you have leisure to give it to me, and for which I shall be thankful.

I have added three

quotations, the first two the earliest probably that have been written, the last is by Lieut Hardy - the latest writer I have read on that section of Country. I am no botanist.

Very Respy.
Yr. Obt. Servt.

J Buckingham Smith

To
Dr John Torry
Princeton N.J.

REFERENCE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

They have poison (in Sonora) which is from a certain tree the size of the apple. No more is necessary for effect than to pluck the fruit & moisten the arrow with it, or if there be no fruit, to break a twig & with the milk from it to do the same. This tree is abundant, & so deadly that if the limes are bruised & steeped in some neighboring water, all the deer and other animals that drink of it soon burst.

From the "Naufragios" of A. Nuñez, Cabeza de Vaca. For observations made 1536.

" On remarqua dans cet endroit un poison qui d'après ce que l'on vit, était le plus dangereux que l'on pût trouver; c'était la sève d'un petit arbre semblable au lentisque, qui il vient dans les terrains argileux x y Ils (les Indiens) ont des poisons avec les quels ils tuèrent beaucoup de chrétiens "

Coronilla 1540

— "The yerba del venado, & yerba de la flecha; the latter used for intoxicating fish, & by some tribes of Indians for poisoning arrows "

N. B. You will observe that this last speaks of two, the first though perhaps not as poisonous.

New York, March 13 1868

Sir:

You are respectfully invited to attend a Regular Meeting of the

American Ethnological Society,

On Tuesday Evening, the 17th of March, at 7 3/4 o'clock, at residence of H. C. Brown Esq. 147 W. 36th St. (6th Bway & 7th Ave)

Amy Bridges
Recording Secretary.

To Hon Buckingham Smith
Care E. A. Duyckinck Esq
20 Clinton Place

From "The Young Voyageurs or the Boy hunters in the North, by Capt. Mayne-Reid" - - 1863

"There is a rich vegetation upon the banks of the Red River, but the flora is very different from that which appears upon the low alluvion of Louisiana. It is Northern, the oak, the elm, the maples, & poplars are seen mingling with birches, willows & aspens. Several species of indigenous fruit trees were observed by Lucien, among which were crab-apple, raspberry, strawberry & currant. There was also seen the fruit called by the voyageurs "le poire", but which in English phraseology is known as the "service-berry" (Amelanchier ovalis) It grows upon a small bush or shrub of six or eight feet high, with smooth pinnate leaves. These pretty red berries are much esteemed & eaten both by Indians & whites, who preserve them by drying, & cook them in various ways. There was still another bush that fixed the attention of our young botanist, as it appeared all along the banks, & was a characteristic of the vegetation of the country. It was not over eight feet in height, with spreading branches of gray color. Its leaves were three inches wide, & somewhat lobed like those of an oak. Of course, at this early season, the fruit was not ripe upon it; but Lucien knew the fruit well. When ripe it resembles very much a red cherry, or still

more, a cranberry, having both the appearance and acrid taste of the latter. Indeed, it is sometimes used as a substitute for cranberries in the making of pies & tarts, & in many parts it is called the "bush cranberry." The name, however, by which it is known among the Indians of Red River is "anepeminan" from "nepin," summer, & "minan," berry. This has been corrupted by the fur-traders & voyageurs into "Pembina;" hence the name of a river which runs into the Red, & also the name of the celebrated but unsuccessful settlement of Pembina formed by Lord Selkirk many years ago. Both took their names from this berry, that grows in abundance in the neighborhood. The botanical appellation of this curious shrub is Viburnum oxycoccos, but there is another species of the viburnum, which is also styled "oxycoccos." pp. 31, 32.

Dr John Torrey [1868?]

My dear Sir:

I have made some memoranda, which I will be glad you explain, so that I may perfect some notes to a translation of that Cabeça de Vaca wrote in 1537

I enclose a note from a work that may have some bearing by Cap. Mayne Reid. —— 1863. upon Cacti B Smith

Ch. 30

This occurs somewhere on the river Bravo del Norte, about the junction with the Pecos, & say near Presidio del Norte: —"The Indians said the "way was along up that river towards the N. for other- "wise in a journey of 17 days we should not find any "thing to eat, except a fruit they call Chacan, which "is ground between stones, & even then it could not "with difficulty be eaten for its dryness & pungency"

What can this be?

Here the Spaniards found Calabaças (pumpkins) and also gourds. They were then several hundred miles from the nearest Spanish explorations

Is it certain that the pumpkin was introduced by the Europeans? —

Ch 26

He speaks of the prodigious quantity of the tea drank by the Indians on some religious occasion. Does the yupon, or cacina, or Ayelachina grow in Texas? Or what could have been the leaves they used for such purpose?

Be pleased to give me the botanical name of the mezquite ~~that~~ is used thereabouts sometimes for food

Do you know with the smoke of what plant these Indians stupified — ?

Ch 31

"They wear a shirt of cotton ... They soap this with a certain root that extremely cleanses" ... What is the botanical name of this tree? I have witnessed the Indian women using it, raising a froth in the bark - in the state of Nuevo Leon. Please give me some account of it. The traveler, by the way, is now in Sonora.

"They have poison from a certain tree the size of the apple. No more is necessary for effect than to pluck the fruit and moisten the arrow with it, or to use a twig or the like. When the leaves are thrown into water the animals that drink of it soon burst. - Jaramillo writes a few years later: "From what was witnessed of its operation & effects there can be no worse found. We understood it to be the milk of a small tree like mastic, growing in salty & steril ground."

Please give me the botanical name of the sweet pepper. Is it Mexican? The Aztecs call it Chile. What is the botanical name of tomato?

I do not find that either of these were found in N. Mexico, though the musk mellon appears to have reached Cibola a considerable time before the Spaniards